



# I'm-a tell you something I don't know if I'm wrong or right



Chaz

 [cvillette](https://cvillette.livejournal.com/)

<https://cvillette.livejournal.com/>  
2008-01-14 19:09:00

MOOD: 😊 limp

MUSIC: Memphis Minnie's Blues Euphemism Clinic

But if you want my bread, you got to stay all night  
I'm gonna bake my biscuits... (<https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A/www.lyricstime.com/memphis-minnie-i-m-gonna-bake-my-biscuits-lyrics.html>)

But dude, you just made bread on Saturday!

Yeah. But biscuits are different.

You don't make biscuits in advance, because mere hours after they come out of the oven? Eh. The flip side, though, is that biscuits are practically impulse bread. Check the freezer, find the spicy minestrone you made for a soggy winter evening, think, "Huh, biscuits would be good with that," and you're halfway there, almost. In thirty minutes max you've got hot, crusty-outside, yummy-smelling bread product to juggle onto a plate while saying, "Ow!Ow!Ow!"

One of my favorite cookbooks is Ronald Johnson's *The American Table*. ([https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A/www.amazon.com/American-Table-Accessible-Richness-Regional/dp/0916562506/ref%3Dsr\\_1\\_1%3Fie%3DUTF8%26s%3Dbooks%26qid%3D1200359108%26sr%3D1-1](https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A/www.amazon.com/American-Table-Accessible-Richness-Regional/dp/0916562506/ref%3Dsr_1_1%3Fie%3DUTF8%26s%3Dbooks%26qid%3D1200359108%26sr%3D1-1)) (I got the 1984 hardcover in a used bookstore; the revised edition had darned well better still have this recipe.) U.S. regional food from a guy whose day job is poetry and catering. (!)

I've gotten food stains on a lot of the pages, but the one the book falls open to is "Happy Valley Biscuits." Ooh, cornmeal biscuits! I tweaked it some, because I wanted more cornmeal taste. It's a fine line: too much cornmeal and not enough wheat flour, and you get cornmeal hockey pucks. This works, though, and I've used both white and whole wheat flour in these with no hockey puck

issues.

These are weird biscuits, because they're made in muffin pans. People will mistake them for corn muffins. But muffins have a different texture: cake-like, with a smooth, shiny top that just barely resists your teeth. Biscuits are crusty, dense even when tender, and that's what these are. You'll see.

If you've got a cast-iron muffin pan, it does a great job on these.

As soon as you think, "Huh. How about biscuits?" start preheating the oven to 450 degrees. Grease a 12-hole muffin pan with shortening or canola oil spray or whatever you usually like.

In a big bowl, combine

1 1/4 cups of white or wheat flour

1/2 cup stone-ground cornmeal (yes, gotta be stone-ground. The stuff in a box in the supermarket is okay in an emergency, but you want that nice slightly-gritty texture)

1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Mix those up well. Remember, this is a quick bread; once that double-acting baking powder gets wet, the train leaves the station, and you won't want to be dealing with streaks of unmixed dry ingredients in there.

Now we get to Coyote's Secret Ingredient. The liquid is supposed to be buttermilk, and while these are perfectly okay biscuits made with milk or soymilk, they're not, you know, OMG. But I am not a big buttermilk fan, at least for drinking. That means, if you buy it for recipes, it's going to sit in the corner of the fridge and Grow Things, because you can't buy buttermilk in half-pints.

But down at the supermarket--some of 'em, anyway--in the baking supplies or in with the powdered milk, you can find powdered buttermilk. It comes in a round cardboard carton, bigger than the can your baking powder is in, but smaller than the rolled oats carton.

Add to your dry ingredients however much powdered buttermilk the label says makes one cup. The stuff I use, that's four tablespoons. Mix it in.

Oh, so in recipe format, that's:

4 tablespoons powdered buttermilk

If you like buttermilk, you can use the drinkable wet version, of course; one cup. But if you're doing that, don't add it until after you've mixed in the butter. Which we're about to do.

1/4 cup butter

Have I talked about adding fats to dry ingredients? If you've got a stand mixer, it's easy; cut your butter into pieces, throw 'em in the bowl with the dry stuff, and mix on slow speed until the result looks like slightly damp sand. Or, amusingly, cornmeal.

If you don't have a mixer, cut the butter up in pieces, throw 'em into the bowl with the dry stuff, and mash the butter into the flour mixture with the tines of a fork, or with a pastry cutter, which is sort of an oversize semi-circular fork with a handle, sort of. This takes a little patience and practice, but you can get the ingredients to damp-sand state by this method, too, if you just keep mashing and stay in the moment.

Now, the moment of truth! Add liquid! If you opted for real buttermilk, add 1 cup now.

If you opted for buttermilk powder, add:  
1 cup water.

Mix quickly just until you've wetted all the dry mixture. You're not beating, here, just combining the ingredients and moving on.

Divide the mixture, which will be scoopable but not runny, among the cups of the muffin pan. The cups should be about two-thirds full--not to the top, or the batter will escape when it rises. (Ugly thing, batter on the lam.) Bake for 12 to 15 minutes. The tops will be irregular and browned on the raised parts and crusty.

Shake out of the pan into a bowl lined with a clean cloth and fold the cloth over them to keep them cozy while you remove individual biscuits from the company of their kinfolk and devour them. Usually with butter.

Mmmm. Post-climbing biscuits.

**TAGS:** [recipes](#)



[locked] Dream Journal

All right, unconscious mind. We're coming to an accommodation. If the dreams are you cleaning

Elvis doesn't live here anymore.

Hey there. Sorry about the drama. It was... it was an emotional decision, and I didn't

Poppets.

Puppets. Poppet

puppets. Scary.

41 comments




 trolldatz

January 15 2008, 02:52:47 UTC COLLAPSE

...when's my next cooking lesson again?



 cvillette

January 15 2008, 06:03:51 UTC COLLAPSE

Now that I am not all about the disgusting secretions (see how I didn't use the word "snot?"), how about Wednesday night?



 trolldatz

January 15 2008, 15:12:30 UTC COLLAPSE

Does that mean you're up to something tonight? (Yeah, I'm just being nosey. Whomp me if I go too far.)



 cvillette

January 15 2008, 15:16:43 UTC COLLAPSE

No big. Tasha asked me to help her move a car this evening.

Y'know, I hope she didn't mean *by leverage*.

Huh. And it's not likely to involve anything illegal, right? No.



 trolldatz


January 15 2008, 15:22:01 UTC COLLAPSE

Right.

She's a Congressional employee.


Is it anywhere near the Watergate Hotel?

(Hey, wall Thursday? I'm getting strong enough to go three times a week, I think.)

 [cvillette](#)  
[January 15 2008, 15:33:56 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)


See, that right there, that's what worries me... Nah. (I mean, Gordon Liddy didn't take a G-man with him, did he?)

Thursday, wall, excellent plan. Plenty of time for the microscopic tears in one's muscle tissue to heal up. \*g\*

 [Ometotchtli](#)  
[January 15 2008, 15:37:12 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

*(I mean, Gordon Liddy didn't take a G-man with him, did he?)*


You know, I bet he-who-is-not-to-be-named has a funny story about that.

 [ace\\_cub\\_reportr](#)  
[January 15 2008, 15:38:27 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

And if you buy me lunch, I'll tell you all about it.

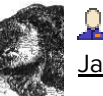
Not a G-man.

And not *there*, exactly.

 [cvillette](#)  
[January 15 2008, 20:43:09 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

I did.

And he did.

 [cvillette](#)  
[January 15 2008, 15:39:31 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

We can name him! He said I could call him "Ace!"

 [Ometotchtli](#)  
[January 15 2008, 15:44:41 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

Some things, it is better not to attract the attention of, Grasshopper.

*Deleted comment*



 [cvillette](#)

[January 15 2008, 03:14:44 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

Sold!



 [txanne](#)

[January 15 2008, 04:08:39 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

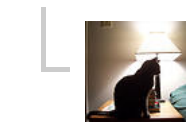
Mmm. That'd be much easier than my cornbread recipe, which calls for a small cast-iron skillet. (You fry bacon in it first, then you put the bacon in the batter, then you put the batter in the greasy skillet and whap the whole thing into the oven, with or without cheese and Hatch chiles. My baby brother is smart.)



 [cvillette](#)

[January 15 2008, 05:59:04 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

Hatch chiles. Sigh. I'm living in a place where mostly nobody understands the true relationship of those two words.



 [txanne](#)

[January 15 2008, 11:55:41 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

::pets::

I used to live in a town with a big fancy grocery store which had a Hatch festival at harvest-time. (Gosh, I miss civilization.) They'd bring in fresh chiles by the truckload, and you could have all the samples you wanted, probably on the theory that the first one's free...oh, and they set up a roaster in the parking lot, so the whole place smelled wonderful.



 [cvillette](#)

[January 15 2008, 15:20:34 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

Oh, the gas-fire revolving roasters. The smell of chiles roasting in one of those makes my legs rubbery. I will eat roasted Hatch chiles with bread and butter, as if they were jam.



 [ace\\_cub\\_reportr](#)

[January 15 2008, 15:24:07 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

They're not?



 [cvillette](#)

[January 15 2008, 15:37:23 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

You do it with the *hot* ones, don't you?

What did you bring for lunch today? I don't smell anything on the other side of the divider yet, so I figure it's not something you have to take the lid off periodically to relieve the pressure.




 [ace\\_cub\\_reportr](#)

January 15 2008, 15:41:14 UTC COLLAPSE

I was going out for lunch today, actually. WW and I have a date at the gym. She's going to show me that scissors takedown thing.

You busy?



 trollcatz

January 15 2008, 15:46:04 UTC COLLAPSE

When you've said the magic words, "Wonder Woman" and "scissors takedown?"

Mean boy.



 cvillette

January 15 2008, 15:46:19 UTC COLLAPSE

WW beat me up *again*?

Sure thing!



 avocadovpx

January 15 2008, 04:47:14 UTC COLLAPSE

Powdered buttermilk -- also worth keeping around for things like devil's food cake, Viable Pancakes, etc.

The only households I know of where buttermilk doesn't spoil are those containing 1) old Southern folks, 2) cornbread, and 3) one or more tall drinking glasses. The math practically does itself.

"Post-climbing"? Just how tall *\*are\** those biscuits? ;)



 cvillette

January 15 2008, 05:55:50 UTC COLLAPSE

*"Post-climbing"? Just how tall \*are\* those biscuits? ;)*

Don't make me send big guys in suits and sunglasses with coily cords poking out their ears over to your house. \*g\*



 calanthe\_b

January 15 2008, 06:47:55 UTC COLLAPSE

Thank you for solving a mystery for me. I finally understand what Americans mean when they use the word 'biscuit'!

It's more or less what the rest of the English-speaking world calls a scone, no? Only we don't use cornmeal. And the way we do it, using muffin cups is cheating. Just cut them out of the dough with a biscuit-cutter (eeek, what you'd call a cookie-cutter, I guess?) and put 'em on a baking-tray so they'll just press together when they start to rise.

I can't cook anything I'd want to inflict on another human being, but certain sorts of plain baking I can do, when I have a decent oven, and scones fall into that category.



 [cvillette](#)

[January 15 2008, 14:17:14 UTC](#)

[COLLAPSE](#)

No, scones are a bit different. At least, American scones are a bit different. Sweeter, for one thing.

And what you are describing is a regular biscuit, not a drop biscuit. Drop biscuits are too runny/sticky to cut. Actually, I posted a recipe for the other kind of biscuits not too long ago, if you look back...

You know, looking at this blog, it looks like I eat nothing but carbohydrates.

Oh, right.

I eat nothing but carbohydrates.



 [cvillette](#)

[January 15 2008, 15:27:45 UTC](#)

[COLLAPSE](#)

...and you know, I even thought about addressing the difference between scones and Amurrican biscuits, and got involved in all that other stuff, and never got back to it.

Someone once told me that in the U.K. cornmeal isn't something you put in bready things; it's something you sprinkle on the baking sheet before you put the bready things on it and bake them. She was from the American Southwest and wistful about lack of cornbread. Wonder if that's still true?



 [kalorlo](#)

[January 15 2008, 19:34:00 UTC](#)

[COLLAPSE](#)

I haven't had any bready things that I knew had cornmeal in them (and haven't seen it sprinkled on baking trays either - they're just greased).

I might have to try making some of these as I've been curious about what they're like too. I don't think stone-ground is going to happen though, given Sainsburys lists exactly one kind of cornmeal on its website.



 [calanthe-b](#)

[January 15 2008, 22:22:07 UTC](#)

[COLLAPSE](#)

That might be cornflour, which we have in Australia too. I've never actually seen cornmeal here, but I'm aware that the two things are different.



*Deleted comment*



 [calanthe-b](#)

[January 16 2008, 01:47:06 UTC](#)

[COLLAPSE](#)



Your corn flour sounds like it is the same thing as our corn flour. Two nations no longer entirely divided by a single language, yay!


I've never come across anything called ground corn, but then, I've never gone looking...

 [calanthe\\_b](#)

[January 15 2008, 22:20:30 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

~g~ I've seen what Americans call scones. By Australian standards, they're big, doughy, lumpy cakes. Australian scones should be no larger than a small fist, a little bit sweeter than bread but finer in texture. Ingredients are flour (SR), salt, sugar, butter/margarine, milk and water. You can get away with adding sultanas or currants, or even mixed dried fruits, but weird new ideas like savoury scones and chocolate scones and so on are still viewed with suspicion.

Except for the pumpkin scones. They're just a running joke.

 [nebula99](#)

[January 15 2008, 10:34:05 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

hmm, your recipe style is tempting. And I have always been curious about American biscuits - we find them confusing. \*g\* I'm guessing they are scone-like in texture.

*(Ugly thing, batter on the lam.)*

\*shudders\* I have cleaned the resulting mess.



 [cvillette](#)

[January 15 2008, 14:17:00 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

Somewhere between scone and shortcake.

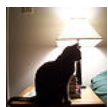
Actually, a lot of people will use biscuits as a shortcake replacement. Biscuits, strawberries, and cream! NOM NOM NOM.

 [nebula99](#)

[January 15 2008, 17:04:08 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

*Biscuits, strawberries, and cream! NOM NOM NOM*

Stop! I haven't had clotted cream in far too long. Your noms are making me yearnful.



**Things buttermilk is good for.**

 [txanne](#)

[January 15 2008, 12:03:51 UTC](#) [COLLAPSE](#)

Buttermilk makes the world's best fried chicken if you add a little baking powder to it. Then you dredge the chicken in flour, then b'milk, then flour again. Fry until mahogany-colored.

Ooh, and then the gravy--drain the grease. Make a roux. Add regular milk and a little salt, and stir like hell. (The "stir like hell" is canonical, from my mother's stepmother.) It's so thick you can stand a spoon up in it, and you sort of have to wrap the rice around it. Mmmmmm. Well, I dunno, that might be just an example of My Mother's Cooking Syndrome.

And buttermilk pie! You know about buttermilk pie, right?



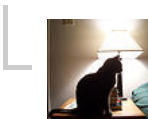
**Re: Things buttermilk is good for.**

 **cvillette**

January 15 2008, 14:20:23 UTC    COLLAPSE

...I bet you're already in a relationship, aren't you?

Drat.



**Re: Things buttermilk is good for.**

 **txanne**

January 15 2008, 14:59:51 UTC    COLLAPSE

:-) I don't have to date you to cook for you!



**Re: Things buttermilk is good for.**


 **cvillette**

January 15 2008, 15:44:33 UTC    COLLAPSE

Well, if I were already in a relationship, Memphis Minnie would have something to say about that, too.  
\*g\*

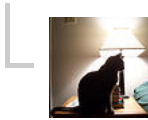


**Re: Things buttermilk is good for.**

 **trollcatz**

January 15 2008, 15:45:06 UTC    COLLAPSE

Blues euphemism!



**Re: Things buttermilk is good for.**

 **txanne**

January 15 2008, 15:51:35 UTC    COLLAPSE

Hee.

 **huladavid**

January 19 2008, 19:44:02 UTC    COLLAPSE

Over Christmas & New Years I was up at my brother and sister-in-law's dairy farm "farmwifing" (just to drop the confusion level I gotta tell ya that I'm a guy), and ended up making a fair amount of biscuits. My SIL has a trick that I really like-adding oatmeal (maybe a half-cup) to the ingredients. Ya end up with nice rustic tasting biscuits, but ones that aren't as "hard-core" those made with whole wheat flour.

I think I wanna go bake something now.

Bad influence...

*Deleted comment*



 cvillette

January 28 2008. 05:42:14 UTC

COLLAPSE

Hi there! Good luck with those. It's practice more than anything, I think.

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[locked] Dream Journal

All right, unconscious mind. We're coming to an accommodation. If the dreams are you cleaning

Elvis doesn't live here anymore.

Hey there. Sorry about the drama. It was... it was an emotional decision, and I didn't

Poppets.

Puppets. Poppet

puppets. Scary.